Met Office

January 2005

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1961-1990.

UK overview

Another very mild month across the whole of the UK. In terms of mean temperature, it was the warmest since 1990 for England, Wales and the UK as a whole. However, Northern Ireland had a slightly warmer January in 2002, with Scotland being similar to the value recorded in 2002. Rainfall well above average over most of Scotland, and parts of Cumbria and N Wales. However, most of England & Wales had well below average rainfall, continuing the pattern of the previous two months. Well above average sunshine levels over the SE of the UK.

Stormy spell occurred on the night of 11/12th over NW Scotland, with gusts of 106 m.p.h. at Barra and 101 m.p.h. at Stornoway (both Western Isles). 142 mm of rainfall fell in a 24-hour period on 6th January at Kinlochewe (Highland). 224.8 mm fell at Shap (Cumbria) in a 72-hour period between 5th and 7th.

England and Wales diary of highlights

Unsettled through the first half of the month with spells of windy weather. Well above average rainfall over parts of north Wales and Cumbria, although the majority of England and Wales had well below average rainfall. A brief quieter spell around the middle of the month, but unsettled weather returned bringing wintry precipitation. Milder weather returned by the end of the month.

1st: An unsettled start to the new year with belts of rain sweeping across from the west accompanied by strong winds. A gust of 63 knots (72 m.p.h.) was reported at Cranwell (Lincolnshire) and 65 knots (75 m.p.h.) at Capel Curig (Gwynedd). Despite the wind and rain it was mild with highs generally around 10 to 12 °C and locally very mild with Credenhill (Herefordshire) and Torquay (Devon) reaching 13.2 °C.

2nd & 3rd: The weather briefly settled on these days with plenty of dry and sunny weather. Torquay recorded 7.2 hours of sun on the 2nd with Cromer (Norfolk) recording 6.1 hours on the 3rd. Despite the sunshine, temperatures were closer to normal on the 2nd but it was mild, locally very mild, once again on the 3rd.

4th to 12th: Very unsettled through this period with spells of windy weather for most. Northern and western parts also bore the brunt of some very wet weather, but it was drier elsewhere. On the 4th, gusts of 40-50 knots (46-58 m.p.h.) were reported quite widely, while Capel Curig recorded over an inch of rain (26 mm). On the 5th, Capel Curig recorded a further 31.6 mm of rain in 12 hours. The 6th saw the return of windy weather for the north and west with gusts of 54 knots (62 m.p.h.) at Redesdale (Northumberland) and 58 knots (67 m.p.h.) at Capel Curig. Northern and western parts recorded very wet weather on the 7th with over 100 mm (4 inches) at both Capel Curig and Shap Fell (Cumbria). A further 81 mm fell at Shap on the 8th, with the prolonged wet spell leading to flooding in Carlisle. The early hours of the 8th also saw the windiest spell of weather with a gust of 88 knots (101 m.p.h.) at St Bees Head (Cumbria) and a gust of 89 knots (102 m.p.h.) at Aberdaron on the Lleyn peninsula (Gwynedd). It was also windy further south and east with gusts of 69 knots (79 m.p.h.) at Marham (Norfolk) and 60 knots (69 m.p.h.) at Luton (Bedfordshire). Although not as strong, the windy weather continued from the 9th through to the 12th and there was a gust of 70 knots (81 m.p.h.) at Capel Curig on the 11th. Despite the wind and in some places the rain, the weather was mild or very mild through this period with several places recording 14 to 15 °C on the 7th.

13th to 16th: A build of pressure from the south brought a more settled spell of weather. Southern and eastern parts enjoyed some sunshine but also had to endure some overnight frosts. Further north and west, skies were cloudier with outbreaks of rain and drizzle, particularly over coasts and hills. It was generally mild by day and locally very mild, with Capel Curig reaching 13.1 °C on the 15th and Prestatyn (Denbighshire) recording 13.3 °C on the 16th.

17th to 22nd: The ridge of high pressure slid away eastward with a series of Atlantic depressions and their associated weather fronts bringing a return of more unsettled weather. Thunder was associated with one such weather front as it crossed on the 18th, with the precipitation turning wintry over higher ground and further snow showers developed in its wake over northern England. There was further wintry precipitation across Wales on the 21st, while rain also turned to sleet and snow across the high ground of central southern England on the 22nd. It was windy at times through this period with gust of 50-60 knots (57-69 m.p.h.) around western coasts on the 18th and widespread gusts of 43-52 knots (50-60 m.p.h.) on the 20th.

23rd to 27th: A build of pressure to the west of the UK brought a return of more settled weather to most parts. However, the northerly flow brought a wintry mix of showers to eastern coastal counties. In fact there were frequent snow showers across eastern Kent on the 25th with reports of 3-4 cm of lying snow around Dover and Folkestone.

28th to 31st: The high pressure block to the west of the UK continued to dominate the weather but with the wintry mix in the east removed as milder air fed around the high. Initially there were still showery outbreaks of rain in the east but these began to die away. Cloud cover varied with clear spells by night leading to local fog and frost. Initially temperatures were close to normal but it became milder and it was locally very mild on the 31st, thanks to some sunny periods, with Boulmer (Northumberland) recording 13.5 °C.

Scotland diary of highlights

Very stormy weather buffeted Scotland during the first 12 days, culminating in a severe gale on the night of 11th/12th, when five people on South Uist were killed. The disturbed weather continued until the 21st, with some snow. The last 10 days was a complete contrast as a large anticyclone to the west maintained very quiet conditions.

During the first 12 days a succession of deep depressions moved east from Iceland to the Norwegian Sea, bringing very wet and stormy weather to Scotland. Gusts exceeding 70 m.p.h. were recorded somewhere in Scotland on all but two days. Daily rainfall exceeded 25 mm at some station on all but three days. Most of the time was spent in showery airstreams but warm sectors affected the country on the 3rd, 6th and 9th. These brought heavy rain to the west, especially on the 6th when 142 mm was recorded at Kinlochewe. On the 9th the temperature rose to 15 °C at Lossiemouth. The climax of the stormy spell occurred on the night of 11th/12th when gusts reached 106 m.p.h. at Barra and 101 m.p.h. at Stornoway.

The generally disturbed westerly weather continued until the 21st, albeit with lighter winds than before. However, another deep depression moved east between Iceland and Norway on the 17th and 18th, bringing snow showers that affected many western and central parts of the country. Gusts reached 81 m.p.h. at Sella Ness.

On the 22nd a large and intense anticyclone developed to the west of the British Isles and remained there until the end of the month. Air of Arctic origin covered the country at first with the temperature falling to -7 °C at several stations. Soon, however, relatively mild air circulating around the high reached Scotland from the north. The mild air brought persistently cloudy conditions to the north, but south of the Highlands the cloud broke to give fair weather.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

Very mild. Stormy at times during the first half of the month.

The month opened in spectacular fashion with an active cold front sweeping eastwards on the 1st. This brought heavy rain to many areas and this was accompanied by a band of active thunderstorms. Colder air in its wake brought squally wintry showers and some lying snow by evening. The colder interlude was very short lived though and much of the first week became very mild with rain at times.

By the evening of the 7th a deepening depression was bringing very wet weather north-east across the country. This gave 30 to 40 mm in many areas in a period of 6 to 9 hours and caused some localised flooding. Overnight, following the rain, westerly winds increased to severe gale force and gusts 65 to 75 m.p.h. caused damage and some trees were felled. As it turned temporarily colder again, showers fell as a wintry mix of rain, hail, sleet and snow. The weather then became quieter for a few days before further stormy weather on the 11th. High winds, this time with gusts to nearer 80 m.p.h. in the north-west caused further tree damage and some significant power outages. The 12th was cold and windy everywhere with frequent wintry showers. After a frosty night, the 13th was bright and dry with some welcome winter sunshine in all areas.

The period from the 14th to the 16th was milder with some rain at times. By the 17th, however, much colder air was advancing from the north-west. By evening showers were falling as snow at all levels and frequent and heavy overnight snow showers gave 5 to 10 cm of snow across most parts by the morning of the 18th with locally 15 cm on some hill roads. Transport disruption occurred and many schools were forced to close for the day. It soon became milder again though with some patchy rain for much of the remainder of the week. The weekend of the 21st to 23rd brought the month's coldest nights with temperatures on the morning of the 23rd widely down to - 5 °C inland.

The remainder of the month was dominated by high pressure in the eastern Atlantic and this gave a good deal of cloudy, mild and dry weather to bring the month to a close.

It was another very mild month and the occurrence of air frost was below average.

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